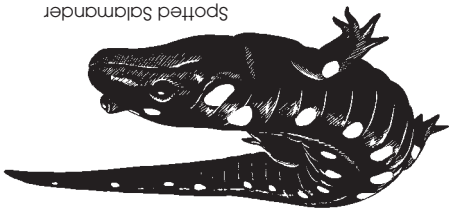


# D. BLAKELEY HOAR SANCTUARY

Brookline, Massachusetts



The Friends of Hoar Sanctuary  
Friends of Hoar Sanctuary was formed in the mid-1990s to cooperate with the Conservation Commission in its efforts to protect this natural area. If you are interested in helping Friends of Hoar Sanctuary maintain and improve the Sanctuary, please contact the Brookline Conservation at (617) 730-2088.



Spotted Salamander

Please respect the Sanctuary by:  
Visiting quietly  
Keeping pets out  
Parking bicycles outside the Sanctuary  
Staying on marked paths  
Not feeding the wildlife  
Picnicking elsewhere  
Leaving plants and animals undisturbed  
Enjoy your visit!

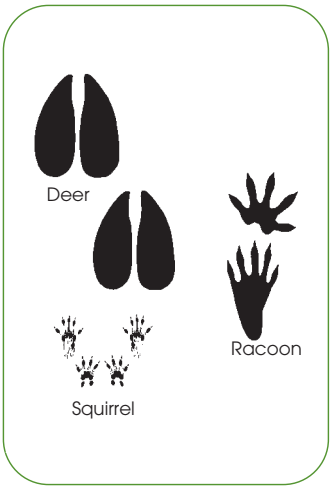
## Natural History

The D. Blakeley Hoar Sanctuary is located in southwestern Brookline, behind Baker Elementary School. It borders on Gerry Road to the southeast, and Boston to the east and north. This natural, undeveloped 25 acre area contains several typical plant communities.

The south branch of the Sawmill Brook flows through the Sanctuary from east to west. In 1964 the Town built a dam along the west side of the land to hold water and create a pond that would attract water fowl. The project was never completed but the dam slowed the drainage of the central section of the sanctuary. As a result, red maple and other species that thrive in wet environments have flourished there.

A hemlock-beech forest has grown on the slopes rising from the central red maple swamp. The most prominent stand is near the Gerry Road entrance. In recent years, however, many of the hemlocks have died. As in many parts of the Eastern United States, the hemlocks are threatened by a tiny insect known as the Woolly

Adelgid. In appearance like a dusting of white snow, hordes of tiny adelgid cling to hemlock twigs, extracting sap and eventually killing the tree. No known treatment is entirely successful.



Animal Tracks

A wooded upland is found in the northeastern part of the Sanctuary. The most common trees here are maple, oak, cherry, and birch. There is an understory of shrubs and a herbaceous layer of woodland plants.

## Social History

In 1630 the land that is now Brookline was parceled out as grants to colonial settlers in Boston. The Hoar Sanctuary land was part of the largest of these grants (600 acres), made to William Tyng. Over the years the original grants were divided many times. Most of the land was cleared and used for farming through the early years of the 20th century. The stone walls remaining in the woods are evidence of this earlier use.

D. Blakeley Hoar, a noted Brookline lawyer and conservationist, left part of his estate to fund the purchase of a bird sanctuary in Brookline. In 1961 the Hoar Memorial Natural Area was established and placed under the management of the Brookline Park Department. Management of the area was transferred to the Conservation Commission when it was established in 1969.

## Plant and Animal Life

The different plant communities in the sanctuary sustain distinct groups of plant and animal life. Great Horned Owls reside year-round in the wooded areas. Pine warblers appear in spring and fall. Spring carpets the forest floor with Canada Mayflower and Starflower, two plants adapted to the low-light conditions. Chipmunk holes abound under the roots of the hemlock trees.

In addition to Red Maple and Alder, the red maple swamp provides good growing conditions

for moisture loving plants and shrubs such as High Bush Blueberry, Sweetpepper Bush, Skunk Cabbage, Jewelweed, and many kinds of ferns.



Tussock Sedge

The Sanctuary contains a type of habitat known as a vernal pool, an area that fills with water in the spring, although it may be dry at other times. The pool provides a critical breeding place for endangered species such as Spotted Salamanders, Wood Frogs and Fairy Shrimp. While salamanders use vernal pools for breeding, they spend the rest of their lives underground in wooded areas. The varied landscape of the Sanctuary provides the unique conditions that these salamanders require to complete their life cycle.

Birds commonly found in and around the moister areas of the Sanctuary include Blue Jays, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Northern Mocking Bird and Carolina Wren. In the summer Green Heron, Wood Duck, Eastern Wood Pewee, Pheobe, Gray Catbird and Red-winged Blackbirds are also seen.

Many small mammals live at the Hoar Sanctuary. Among these are rabbits, chipmunks, and squirrels. White Tailed Deer, Eastern Coyotes, Red Fox, are also seen.

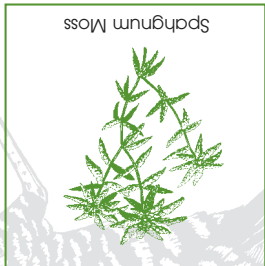
Brookline sanctuaries contain wetlands, including ponds, streams, and vernal pools. These resources are valuable for holding floodwater and replenishing ground water. Since 1972, wetlands have been protected under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act. caused by intensive recreational use. in parks. Nor can they tolerate the disruptions the mowing, raking and planting that are needed which depend on each other—that cannot survive ecosystems—tangled networks of living things Sanctuaries are different from parks. They protect nature or for quiet moments in a natural setting. need our wildlife sanctuaries, whether for studying rect the Town's groundwater resources. People also aside to maintain habitats for wildlife and to protect the Town's groundwater resources. People also Commission. Brookline sanctuaries have been set

Brookline Conservation managed by the owned by the Town and wildlife sanctuaries. It is of Brookline's three Hoar Sanctuary is one

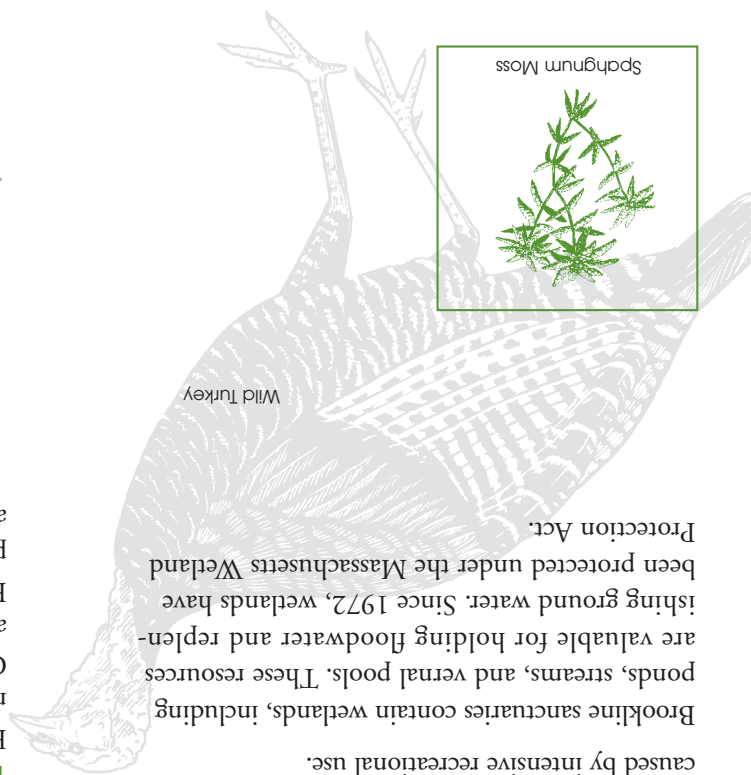


Skunk Cabbage

What is a Wildlife Sanctuary?



Spaghnum Moss



Wild Turkey

Brochure design: Marion Lazar  
Wildlife Drawings: ©1999 Zackery Zolink





## Trail Guide

### 1 The Sawmill Brook

At the entrance to the Sanctuary, the trail crosses a small bridge over the south branch of the Sawmill Brook. Formerly an open stream, the brook is now routed through a large pipe until it reaches the Sanctuary, gathering water from storm drains along the way. The brook flows through the Sanctuary from east to west, passing through a large wetland in the middle of the property.

Beyond the bridge, the trail enters a hemlock grove and forms a loop around the Sanctuary. Turn right and follow the trail markers to a boardwalk crossing the Sawmill Brook further downstream.

The brook is the drinking water for animals here. Look for tracks of foxes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels or birds near the water's edge.

### 2 The Sanctuary Boardwalk

The boardwalk, which leads through the marshy segments of the Sanctuary, was lengthened and rebuilt in 2000-2001. The planks are plastic boards, made entirely from recycled bottles, jars and milk jugs. Continue on the boardwalk to the large viewing platform.

### 3 Wetland Vegetation

While the Sawmill Brook flows through a well-defined channel, water spreads out across a large and irregularly-shaped wetland known as a red maple swamp. The boardwalk platform offers views into this area. Sometimes deep, sometimes dry, this wetland is an important ecosystem. This red maple swamp is typical of New England. Red maples "like to get their feet wet"—that is, their roots will grow despite occasional immersion in standing water, a condition that would kill other types of trees. Red maples drop bright red flowers all over the boardwalk in early spring. In early autumn, their leaves turn to shades of brilliant red, orange, yellow, or even pink.

Skunk cabbage is pervasive throughout this area. It emerges in the fall as a silvery pointed cone and remains that way through the winter. In February or March, its purplish-green flower emerges, producing heat that may melt the surrounding snow. Later,

the plant will grow leaves the size of dinner plates. Whatever the season, it retains its skunk-like odor.

### 4 Roxbury Puddingstone

Leaving the boardwalk, follow the trail along the base of the slope behind Baker School, noticing the large boulders. Soon, a dramatic rock outcropping rises steeply to the right.

This is Roxbury Conglomerate, a rock formation found only in the Boston area. A sedimentary rock full of pebbles and cobbles, it was formed by glacial action some 600 million years ago. It is commonly called Roxbury Puddingstone, a term attributed to the poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, who noted that the embedded pebbles looked like "plums in a pudding."

Grey-green patches of lichen carpet large portions of these rocks. They grow without soil, drawing minerals directly from the stone. Darker green mosses grow in clumps among the lichens. Moss builds up a small layer of soil in which seeds of other plants may sprout. Notice the trees that cling tenaciously to life on the steep, stony slope.

### 5 Wetland Bird Life

Continue along the trail to the second wetland boardwalk. The tangled vines to the right of the boardwalk provide good cover and plenty of seeds and berries for small birds. Among the small birds that may be seen or heard in the Sanctuary are White-throated sparrows, Black-capped chickadees, Scarlet Tanagers and many kinds of warblers.

### 6 Wetland Insects and Wildlife

Follow the trail through a sloping, wooded area containing sizable boulders of Roxbury Puddingstone. Continue onto the third wetland boardwalk.

The wet portions of the Sanctuary provide important habitat for many creatures. In addition to the more noticeable insects that breed in the water, such as dragonflies and mosquitoes, there are huge numbers of obscure insects and other invertebrates. These form the essential base of the food chain for birds, snakes, turtles, frogs and fish. Rotting tree trunks full of holes serve as shelter for animals such as foxes, raccoons and opossums.

Fallen trees create dense thickets in which the birds build nests. Without this type of sanctuary, many native species would find it difficult to survive in Brookline.

### 7 Upland Woods and the Manmade Berm

As the trail winds uphill, hardwood tree species such as red and white oaks, American Beech, Black Birch and Yellow Birch become more prevalent. Several White Pines stand on the knoll in these woods. Nuts and seeds from these trees provide food for raccoon, deer, squirrels and other wildlife.

The trail continues downhill and onto a berm that was built more than fifty years ago as part of a plan (never completed) to flood the wetland and create a pond in this portion of the property. Ducks and turtles swim in the open channel of the Sawmill Brook to the left. To the right, the brook leaves the Sanctuary through a culvert. It then flows through marshland in West Roxbury, and on into the Charles River.

### 8 Vernal Pools

The trail follows along the berm. Often, standing water will be visible at the base of the slopes on both sides. In the last few years, vernal pools have been documented in this location.

### 9 Connection to Leatherbee Woods

A wooden bridge to the right about halfway down the berm leads to Leatherbee Woods and Hancock Woods, two large conservation areas in Boston. These adjacent natural areas form a valuable "green corridor," enabling native wildlife and plants to flourish.

### 10 The Hemlock Grove

The trail rises at the end of the berm, leading into a grove of towering hemlock trees, many of them more than 75 years old. Those trees marked with a bright green dot at the base are being treated for Woolly Adelgid. As hemlocks have died, they have been cut down leaving open space, and small saplings are beginning to emerge.

Despite their height, hemlocks have very shallow root systems. Please walk carefully to avoid damaging the trees or yourself as you proceed down the slope back to the Sanctuary entrance.